

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes (approved 1-21-09)

Monthly Meeting

January 12, 2009

Chairperson Mary Kay Sigaty called the monthly meeting to order 8:32 a.m. on January 12, 2009, in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room, 8930 Stanford Boulevard, Columbia.

Members present on call to order: Calvin Ball, Greg Fox, Mary Kay Sigaty and Courtney Watson. Jennifer Terrasa arrived at 8:34 a.m.

Police Chief William McMahon reported on efficiencies that the Department has made to cut mileage traveled in police vehicles and to use staff time more efficiently. He reported that the manpower strength is being retained. A class will graduate in February with 15 new Howard County recruits. A new class will begin February 20 with 23 candidates, and a group of lateral transfers has been completed between the classes. The Council affirmed their interest in maintaining public safety as the county manages the revenue shortfall.

Ms. Sigaty proposed a new schedule for monthly meetings, to be finalized at a later date. She also noted that the Executive is proposing legislation related to the Soil Conservation District, which is also of interest to the Patuxent River Commission, on which she serves.

Ms. Terrasa reported that the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) will hold its first Legislative Committee meeting on January 28. She reported that MACo is concerned about the State's possible encroachment on local authority as it considers legislation resulting from the Growth Task Force.

Ms. Watson asked the Council to endorse State legislation (HC 1209) requested that would require disclosure of contributions for petitions for zoning regulation changes, similar to the disclosure required for zoning map amendments. The Council agreed by consensus.

She also recommended the Council's asking the Executive to revitalize the Adequate Public Facilities Committee to consider possible changes recommended in the APFO provisions. Mr. Ball agreed that APFO may need further consideration, and asked about the process.

Sheila Tolliver gave the Administrator's report of staff activities, pending printing projects, technology updates, and an update on the status of negotiations with the Board of Education concerning facility use.

Haskell Arnold, County Auditor, reported on audits underway. He also reported that four calls have come into the fraud, waste, and abuse hotline, but that none was appropriate for the Auditor's follow-up.

Ray Wacks, Budget Director, summarized revenue trends and factors in revenue sources that differentiate the State's fiscal picture from that of the County. He noted that the next important piece of information related to the County's resource picture will be the State aid allocated for the County. He also noted that he continues to work with the Board of Education and others on benefit modifications that will limit the other post-employment benefit (OPEB) exposure of the County.

Peter Beilenson, Health Officer, and Liddy Garcia-Bunuel, Acting Director of Healthy Howard, discussed the Health Department's progress in identifying candidates for Healthy Howard benefits. He estimated that approximately 20,000 people are uninsured in Howard County, of whom about 15,000 are adults. In twelve days of recruiting, Healthy Howard, has enrolled 1080 of these in some kind of health program, most in existing programs, such as Medicaid, the Child Health Insurance Program (CHIP), or Primary Access to Care (PAC). They enrolled 299 people in the Kaiser Bridge program, developed as part of the Healthy Howard program negotiations. He also identified 123 people who were eligible for the Healthy Howard program. Dr. Beilenson reported that the enrollees are distributed among the five council districts.

He estimated that about 12,000 uninsured people in Howard County would be eligible for the Healthy Howard program. He described a number of outreach initiatives underway to inform these targeted individuals about the available services through Healthy Howard. He described State software, Healthy Link, that allows the Health Department, as the pilot program, to identify all types of health services for which a person may be eligible. Council members expressed interest in the Department's facilitating use of this software by other agencies and organizations, particularly non-profit groups, who may be in contact with clients who would be eligible for health services.

Ms. Garcia-Bunuel distributed information about the staff of Healthy Howard.

There followed a discussion of possible outreach efforts to allow Healthy Howard to reach a larger share of the projected eligible population.

The Council reviewed their proposed budget for FY 2010, distributed in advance of the meeting. They directed a reduction of \$2000 in the allowance for building and fixed equipment. On a motion by Courtney Watson, seconded by Calvin Ball, the Council adopted unanimously the proposed budget as revised by this reduction.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.